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SUBJECT: QATAR'S HEIR APPARENT DISCUSS IRAQ, IRAN, SYRIA
WITH MNF-I COMMANDER PETRAEUS

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph LeBaron, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: Visiting MNF-I Commander General David Petraeus met Qatar's Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim Al Thani August 25 to review security progress in Iraq; emphasize the need for Arab engagement with the GOI; discuss the continued threat posed by Al-Qaida; urge the region to remain united in the face of Iran's malign influence; and thank Qatar for its support for the U.S. military. Sheikh Tamim said most Arab countries are too preoccupied with internal problems to focus on reaching out to the Iraqi Government, and that Syrian President Bashar al-Asad's thinking is evolving such that he now regards Al-Qaida, not Israel, as Syria's principal enemy.
End summary.

12. (C) MNF-I Commander GEN David Petraeus met August 25 with Qatar's Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, at the Amiri Diwan in Doha. Sheikh Tamim was joined by the Chief of Staff of the Qatari Armed Forces, MG Hamad bin Ali Al-Attiyeh, QAF Chief of International Cooperation, BG Abdulla Juma'an al-Hamad, and Sheikh Tamim's office director, Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa. GEN Petraeus was joined by the Director of the Commander's Initiatives Group, COL Mike Bell, DCM, and OMC Chief.

13. (C) Tamim welcomed GEN Petraeus, noting that the U.S. and Qatar are both "in the same boat, have the same aims, and must work together for stability in the region." He said the main challenge in the region is not Iraq, but Iran. Qatar believes Iran is using this period, while the U.S. is preoccupied with Iraq, to finish its nuclear program quickly. The Amir visited Iran a few days ago because, the Crown Prince said, the Amir believes a country must speak to its neighbors.

14. (C) Petraeus responded that Iran is a revolutionary power, not satisfied with the status quo, and intent on pursuing regional hegemony. Iraq should be the number one defense against Iranian influence. Arab countries, he explained, complain about Iranian influence in Iraq - so what they should do is exert some Arab influence. He assessed that the Iraqis are Arabs -- that is their identity -- and they don't want to be dominated by Iran. For Arab states concerned about Iranian influence, he offered that those states need to ensure that Iraq feels the embrace of other Arab countries. He noted that fortunately, some Arab leaders are already visiting Iraq, including King Abdullah of Jordan, the Foreign Minister of the UAE, and Saad Hariri and Foad Siniora of Lebanon. Tamim said that the difficulty in gaining Arab influence in Iraq was that most Arab countries have their own internal problems and stability in Iraq is not one of their priorities.

15. (S) Petraeus said that violence in Iraq is down

significantly. "Special groups," including members of a group called Kata'ib Hizballah (or Iraqi Hizbollah), that are supported by Iran, remain a threat. Petraeus told the Crown Prince about the Improvised Rocket Assisted Munitions that had the potential to cause mass casualties. Petraeus argued that Iran needs to know that the United States has redlines with respect to this sort of activity. He added that the region needs to communicate that it is united against malign Iranian influence.

¶6. (S) Petraeus emphasized that Al-Qaida continues to represent a significant threat. Syria, in particular, should be extremely concerned about Al-Qaida given the considerable economic problems Syria faces. Tamim said Qatar is investing in Syria specifically because they want Syria to be "a part of us (i.e. the Arab world), not a part of Iran." Petraeus agreed on the importance of getting Syria out of the Iranian orbit. Tamim said he believes Syria is changing. Tamim assessed that although those around him are difficult to deal with, Bashar himself is a good person, and his thinking is changing too)- even commenting recently, Tamim claimed, that Israel is not the enemy, Al-Qaida is.

¶7. (C) Petraeus thanked Qatar for its support to the U.S. military, including use of Al-Udeid Air Base, construction of a second runway, and willingness to host a regional CHOD conference in January. This is all of tremendous value to us and the U.S. is grateful. Tamim and Petraeus concluded by trading ideas on establishment of a military academy in Qatar. Qatar's efforts to open a military academy in Doha modeled on the United States Military Academy at West Point

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didn't bear fruit, so they struck a deal with the French military academy, St. Cyr. Petraeus emphasized the advantages of the West Point model)- a full university program coupled with military education -- and recommended engaging someone familiar with the West Point model to help guide Qatar's plans in this area.

¶8. (U) General Petraeus has cleared this message.
LeBaron